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# DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

## INFORMATION SERVICE

### FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release to SUNDAY PAPERS OF AUGUST 25, 1946.

A total of 64,523 fur-seal skins were taken in the Government-administered sealing operations on Alaska's Pribilof Islands during the 1946 season which closed August 8, Secretary of the Interior J. A. Krug announced today.

This represents a decrease of 12,441 skins under the 1945 take, due, according to officials of the Fish and Wildlife Service of the Department of the Interior, to the late arrival of the seal herd at the islands this year, probably because of unusually severe weather last winter.

Despite the 1946 take, the seal herd numbered 3,386,008 animals when the annual census was taken on August 10, Secretary Krug stated. This is an increase of 7.31 per cent over the 1945 census of 3,155,268 animals.

Fur-seals, which have a soft and beautiful underpelage are highly valued and the Pribilof Island herd is estimated to be worth in excess of \$100,000,000.

When the Federal Government assumed active management of the fur-seals in the Pribilofs in 1910, the herd contained only 132,279 animals. By careful conservation the herd has been developed to its present size and, at the same time, has produced 1,367,322 skins which have been sold for the account of the Government.

More than 25,000 Alaska seal skins will be sold at a semi-annual public auction by the Fouke Fur Company in St. Louis on October 21, for the Government's account. At the last sale in St. Louis, on April 29, 28,032 seal skins were sold, the skins bringing a top price of \$114 and averaging \$87.51.

When the United States purchased Alaska in 1867, the fur-seal herd numbered about 3,000,000 animals. But uncontrolled independent groups killed some 329,000 seals in the following two years.

From 1870 to 1910, the Government leased the right to take fur-seal skins on the islands to private corporations. Under a first 20-year lease, 1,977,377 skins were taken and the annual take was frequently in excess of 100,000 skins. Under second 20-year lease, the total take was 342,651 skins.

The leasing system was discontinued in 1910 and the fur-seal herd was administered until 1913 by the Secretary of Commerce and Labor and, then, until 1939 by the Secretary of Commerce. Since 1939 it has been under the direction of the Secretary of the Interior, through the Fish and Wildlife Service. At present the herd is protected under a provisional agreement between the United States and Canada whereby Canada receives 20 per cent of the skins taken.

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